



Central News – April 2026

Membership information, updates and engagement

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Important dates	
20 April 2026	Membership Townhall [click to join]
22 April 2026	Fireside Chat [click to join]
27 May 2026	Festival of Remembrance ballot opens

A message on Youth Membership

We realise there has been considerable concern about ceasing the current youth membership model. **Please be assured that this is a temporary measure and we have not ceased Youth Membership**; we have a temporary pause on accepting new youth members whilst we look again at what youth membership offers and, most importantly, how we can ensure we are carrying out any

youth activity in a way that meets our safeguarding obligations.

There is a very specific commitment to youth work in our new strategy but there is some groundwork to be done before we are ready to launch anything new.

As part of this work, we are pulling together a group of County Presidents, County Chairs, members and staff, all of whom have experience of working with young people. Their task is to look again at what the RBL offers young people, how we can make this bigger and better, and how we can do it safely.

We want to create a programme of activities, events, online communications etc., which actually offers something attractive to young people and gets them properly involved in the RBL. Currently, there is little to attract young people in or entice them to stay within membership. We currently only have 350 youth members across the entire country, which tells us we need to do something differently to attract far more young people to join us.

As part of this work, we are currently speaking to the national heads of the three cadet forces about building a new partnership with them at both a national and local level, so that cadets can get involved with us at national events and with the work of branches locally. We are also expanding the work we are doing with schools to reach as many school children as possible with the message of the poppy, the role of the armed forces, and how they can get involved with the RBL.

We do recognise that pausing youth membership whilst we undertook this work would cause issues for branches who wanted to train potential new youth standard bearers and band members, so we have allowed young people undertaking those roles to still join us (and thus be covered by insurance, etc.).

In addition, there is no restriction on young people attending branch events or meetings provided they are accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. If a branch member wants to bring their children to an event and get them involved in branch activities, then that is absolutely fine, but they remain the responsibility of the parent. Branches are also encouraged to create local affiliations with youth groups which helps generate interest from young people in the work of the RBL.

You may also have noticed we are recruiting a new Director of Armed Forces Engagement, Partnerships and Youth. This is a senior role with specific responsibility for helping design something new and exciting for youth membership.

I hope this reassures you that we have certainly not given up on youth membership and we are not

ceasing it, but we are trying to create something that is exciting and appealing to potential youth members and, at the same time, fulfil our obligation to do this safely.

Nina Villa

Executive Director: Membership, Armed Forces and Community Engagement

RBL's engagement with the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill

There has been some concern within the Armed Forces community because of the government's plans to 'repeal and replace' the Northern Ireland Legacy Act; indeed, this issue was raised at several County and District Conferences earlier in 2026.

Over the past year, RBL's Campaigns, Policy and Research (CPR) team has engaged with politicians and officials on the new legislation and is working hard to represent Op Banner veterans and their families, as well as families bereaved of a serving person as a result of the Troubles. The Second Reading (the initial parliamentary debate) of the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill took place last November. RBL briefed MPs from across the political parties for this debate and highlighted many areas where we believe the Bill is unclear or does not go far enough to provide confidence. The CPR team continues to work with parliamentarians to seek to strengthen the protections and support the legislation offers the Armed Forces community. For any queries, please contact: PublicAffairs@britishlegion.org.uk.

Key information for Annual Conference

We look forward to welcoming you to Brighton in April – whether you're attending in-person or virtually. The final agenda and key information will be emailed to all registered attendees this week.

Annual Report availability

Please note that the 2025 Annual Report will be published on the RBL Governance webpage on Friday 1 May. www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/governance.

Membership Forum questions

To pre-submit questions to the Membership Forum, please [fill in this form](#) by 5pm Friday 24 April. Attendees will also have the opportunity to ask questions during the Membership Forum, whether attending in-person or virtually.

Click and collect your Poppy Shop order

In-person attendees can benefit from free click and collect with Poppy Shop orders! Avoid disappointment by [using this link](#) **no later than midnight 30 April**, to collect at Annual Conference. [Find out more about Poppy Shop click and collect orders here](#). As a reminder, all RBL members are

entitled to 15% off at the Poppy Shop with code MEMBER15 at checkout.

Hear the latest updates in our Membership Townhall

Join us **Monday 20 April** 6pm – 7.30pm for our next Membership Townhall. All members can join this online event to connect with senior membership leaders, and this month our spotlight will be our engagement with young people and the Armed Forces community.

Attendees will be able to ask questions live or via our [pre-submission form](#). Can't make it? The recording will be shared in May's edition of Central News. [Join the Townhall on the day using this link](#). Catch up on February's Townhall [here](#).

Join us for Fireside Chats

You're invited to tune in to RBL's new Fireside Chats! Join us for these online events where we sit down and talk to a member of the Armed Forces Community to hear about their experiences, the lessons they learnt, and their advice for others.

Episode 1: Gritty leadership lessons that stick – from a soldier's perspective

Trigger warning: this talk will be covering incidents which occurred on operational tour

Wednesday 22 April 6.30pm – 8pm

RBL's Jon Summerson will interview Steve Armon. Across 24 years in the infantry, from Northern Ireland to Iraq and five tours of Afghanistan, Steve learned to lead where it counts: under pressure, with people who need you to get it right.

Steve will walk us through the real journey from private to regimental sergeant major and the gritty lessons that stick. We'll break down some of the hard lessons on combat operations and Steve will share key leadership lessons we can all learn from. [Join us using this link on 22 April, via Microsoft Teams](#).

Connecting beneficiaries with RBL services and support

We know that branches regularly connect with potential beneficiaries; and if a veteran or their family presents with a need, the Contact Centre is there to ensure they have access to support. When building connections with other organisations and services, branches are kindly reminded to highlight RBL's services and to share the Contact Centre number: **0808 802 8080**.

We encourage beneficiaries to make the call themselves, because they can best explain their situation and provide the necessary personal information which they may not wish to share with a member. However, the Contact Centre is happy for a member to make the call – providing the

beneficiary has given verbal or written consent first. Consent can be given during the call or via a short consent form emailed to the Contact Centre.

- **Verbal consent:** A member calls the Contact Centre with the beneficiary present. The phone is passed to the beneficiary to confirm they are happy for the referral to proceed.
- **Written consent:** The beneficiary can complete a consent form, which can be emailed to the Contact Centre via the member (if required). This can be picked up quickly so support can be arranged without delay.

This process protects all involved and ensures personal information is handled safely. Please note members should never act as the point of contact for a beneficiary unless they are a family member.

Safeguarding responsibilities

Safeguarding is important for everyone at RBL, with a duty to protect beneficiaries, staff, members, volunteers and members of the public. It is everyone's responsibility to report safeguarding concerns – and often branch members may see or hear things that don't feel right.

If you have concerns about a vulnerable adult or child being at risk of abuse or neglect, you should report this to your Membership Engagement Officer and copy in safeguarding@britishlegion.org.uk so that appropriate steps can be taken. You should also report if you are made aware of a current or historic serious offence. Our Safeguarding policy is [available on MAP](#).

Festival of Remembrance 2026

This year's Festival of Remembrance will take place on **Saturday 7 November 2026**. Tickets will once again be allocated through a ballot system to ensure all members have a fair chance to purchase tickets. Members must enter the ballot when it opens later in the year for a chance to secure Festival of Remembrance tickets.

Key dates

- Wednesday 27 May: ballot opens for both performances.
- Wednesday 24 June: ballot closes for both performances.

For more key dates and further information, please visit [the Festival of Remembrance webpage](#).

May election guidance for members

On Thursday 7 May there will be local elections in parts of England and devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. Our Campaigns, Policy and Research (CPR) team will be engaging with the

candidates in those elections to ensure that the Armed Forces community is a priority for them.

We have recently launched our manifestos [for Wales and Scotland](#), and have an [Action Plan for Local Authorities in England](#). They contain evidence-based recommendations on the issues facing the people we support. After the elections we will be contacting the newly elected officials asking them to support our community.

For further information please [see the election guidance on MAP](#). If you have any queries, please contact publicaffairs@britishlegion.org.uk.

Thank you for reading! The next edition of Central News is due to be published Tuesday 5 May